

Message Text

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SUBJ : PRESIDENTIAL VISIT: BRIEFING PAPER

REF: AMBASSADOR'S LETTER OF DECEMBER 15 TO THOMAS SMITH,AF/W

THE FOLLOWING PARAGRAPHS CONTAIN THE MISSION'S PROPOSED TEXT
FOR THE BRIEFING PAPER ON "U.S.-NIGERIAN CULTURAL
RELATIONS"BEING PREPARED FOR THE PRESIDENT'S VISIT TO NIGERIA.

1. THE CULTURAL TIES BETWEEN NIGERIA AND THE UNITED STATES
ARE LONGSTANDING AND VARIED. EARLY CONTACTS BETWEEN
NIGERIANS AND AMERICANS RANGED FROM NINETEENTH CENTURY
MISSIONARY ENDEAVORS AND EMIGRATION SCHEMES TO THIS
CENTURY'S EXTENSIVE ROLE PLAYED BY U.S. UNIVERSITIES,
PARTICULARLY BLACK INSTITUTIONS, IN THE EDUCATION OF AFRICANS.
IN THE POLITICAL SPHERE, NIGERIA'S FIRST PRESIDENT,
NNAMDI AZIKIWE, HIMSELF A U.S. UNIVERSITY GRADUATE, RE-
FERRED TO THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF W.E.B. DUBOIS WHEN HE
SAID: "HIS FOUNDING OF THE PAN-AFRICAN CONGRESS IN 1919,
IN PARIS, WAS A SIGNAL FOR THE HISTORIC STRUGGLE BY
AFRICAN NATIONALISTS WHICH LED ULTIMATELY TO THE POLITICAL
EMANCIPATION OF THE CONTINENT."

2. TODAY, THE CULTURAL TIES CONTINUE TO GROW. WELL-KNOWN
NIGERIAN AUTHORS SUCH AS CHINUA ACHEBE AND CYPRIAN
EKWENSI ARE WIDELY READ IN THE UNITED STATES. THE PLAYS
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OF WOLE SOYINFKA ARE BEING PERFORMED HERE, AND
RECENTLY IN WASHINGTON THERE WAS A PREMIERE PERFORMANCE
OF SOME OF THE MUSIC OF NIGERIAN COMPOSER ADAM FIBERESIMA.

3. SPEAKING AT HOWARD UNIVERSITY DURING HIS OCTOBER 1977
VISIT, GENERAL OBASANJO EMPHASIZED THE GREAT DEBT OWED
BY NIGERIA TO BLACK AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES, WHICH PROVIDED

PLACES FOR NIGERIAN STUDENTS MANY YEARS BEFORE NIGERIA'S INDEPENDENCE, AND CONTINUE TO DO SO TODAY. HE SAID: "FROM THE 1930'S HOWARD UNIVERSITY HAS PROVIDED SUCCOR TO HUNDREDS OF NIGERIANS, QUENCHED THEIR THIRST FOR KNOWLEDGE AND PROVIDED JOBS AT ALL LEVELS FOR MANY AMONG THEM.." HE NOTED THAT AMONG HOWARD'S FORMER STUDENTS IS FORMER PRESIDENT AZIKIWE. IT WAS IN RECOGNITION OF THIS TIE THAT THE NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT RECENTLY DONATED DOLS100,000 TO HOWARD UNIVERSITY.

4. BUILDING ON THIS HISOTRICAL BASE, THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE'S CULTURAL EXCHANGE PROGRAM HAS CONTINUED TO REACH OUT TO INFLUENTIAL NIGERIANS AND AMERICANS IN EVERY PROFESSION AND AREA OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LIFE. THE AIM OF THESE EXCHANGES IS TO IMPROVE OUR TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION WITH NIGERIA, SO THAT WE MAY DISCUSS ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE TO BOTH COUNTRIES. IN THE YEARS AHEAD, ISSUES SUCH AS USIS OF ECONOMIC INTERDEPENDENCE, ENERGY TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER, FOOD PRODUCTION, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND THE FREE FLOW OF INFORMATION WILL BECOME OF INCREASING CONER.

5. MORE THAN 50 NIGERIANS WILL VISIT THE U.S. IN 1978 UNDER SUCH PROGRAMS. SOME OF THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN HERE RECENTLY INCLUDE: A MEMBER OF THE FEDERAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION, A STATE SUPREME COURT JUSTICE, THE EMIR OF ZARIA, THE MANAGER OF THE INLAND WATERWAYS COMPANY, A UNCLASSIFIED

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NEWSPAPER EDITOR, A SCULPTOR, THE DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATION OF THE NIGERIAN INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT, AND THE HEAD, PRESS SECTION, MINISTRY OF INFORMATION.

6. THE BIGGEST SINGLE STATE DEPARTMENT CULTURAL PROJECT IN NIGERIA IN RECENT TIMES WAS TO PROVIDE INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL FOR THE 450 AMERICAN ARTISTS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE SECOND WORLD BLACK AND AFRICAN FESTIVAL OF ARTS AND CULTURE(FESTAC), WHICH WAS HELD IN LAGOS LAST YEAR. SOME 17,000 BLACK AND AFRICAN ARTISTS AND PERFORMERS FROM AFRICA, AMERICA, THE CARIBBEAN AND EVEN AUSTRALIA ATTENDED THIS SPECTACULAR EVENT. EBONY MAGAZINE DESCRIBED THE ROLE OF THE U.S. CONTINGENT AS "PIVOTAL" AND QUOTED WITH PRIDE A LAGOS NEWSPAPER HEADLINE: "BLACK AMERICANS STORM FESTAC." THIS HEADLINE REFLECTED THE DESIRE OF THE NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT TO HAVE A SIGNIFICANT AMERICAN PARTICIPATION IN FESTAC. THE U.S. GOVERNMENT PROVIDED ABOUT DOLS400,000 TO MAKE THIS POSSIBLE, INCLUDING DOLS240,000 FOR TWO CHARTERED AIRCRAFTS, TO RESPOND TO THE NIGERIANS" APPEAL.

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